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ART AND PROGRESS

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THE OPEN WINDOW

By HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

IN the harbor of New York one afternoon about two years ago, seventeen thousand immigrants slept in the steerage of a fleet of incoming steamships because the officers of the Bureau of Immigration could find no places for them on land, forty-five thousand immigrants having preceded them during that particular week. The tide had reached its highest mark and broken all records; it has since receded, but it will rise again and probably flow in with a greater volume than it has yet reached. It will tax to the utmost our facilities for the reception and transportation of Europeans bent on becoming Americans. This unexampled influx of men of many races, speaking many languages, worshipping many gods, if they worship at all, united only by a common purpose to change their nationality, capable of classification in a single group only as aliens, presents novel conditions and creates novel perils and opportunities. Those who hold fast by the time-honored traditions of purity of race and homogeneity of aim and ideal as essential to national safety will see the peril rather than the opportunity; those who believe that the energy, force or Providence at work in the world is moving toward a freer race life, a more inclusive relationship between

peoples, will see the opportunity rather than the peril. Those who distrust the power of assimilation in American society will wish to close the ports to this latest kind of foreign invasion; those who believe in the educational power of free institutions will be slow to keep any man out who is eager to come in.

Putting aside these divergent views and looking the present situation in the face, it must be clear to men of all opinions that both safety and opportunity are found in education. This word must, however, receive the deepest and broadest interpretation. The kindergarten, the public school, and all other kinds of formal education must be extended and vitalized, but these forms of training are only parts of a broader system of making men and women of foreign birth and antecedents Americans in instinct, feeling, and ideal. It is not enough to teach them the language and make them competent to carry on the practical business of life; they must be saturated with the American spirit. We must give them in a generation the education which our fathers have been receiving since the days of King Alfred and Charlemagne; an education which involves not only information and discipline, but a view of the nature of

man; of the dignity and sanctity of the individual expressed in terms of free thought, speech, and action; of the purity and integrity of the family; of the obligations of religion enforced in a practical recognition of the brotherhood of all races, creeds, and conditions. If America means anything nobler or more distinctive than unparalleled commercial opportunity it means these fundamental things. It is not enough to teach our language to these newcomers who wish to become Americans; we must teach them the spiritual ideals in which the genius of that language reveals itself. They cannot safely be trusted with the freedom of the American continent unless they are given the freedom of American ideas of life, of man, and of society.

In the light of these facts, of the presence of about thirteen millions of foreign-born men and women in the country, and of the urgent need of saturating them at once with the American spirit, the United States is revealed in its highest aspect as the greatest school which has been opened since time began. At the first glance America looks like a gigantic workshop; at the second glance it becomes an immense schoolhouse. Its more obvious service to humanity is to give the greatest possible number of people the largest possible chance of earning a living; its real service to humanity is to teach the highest view of the dignity and sanctity of the individual man and woman in order that their relations may be put on a spiritual

basis. Those who look at the country as a whole, and in its spiritual aspects, see it as a great school, with innumerable classes, lessons written on invisible blackboards, set to be learned out of numberless text-books. In this education the real function of the United States reveals itself, and in this searching training of alien races it fulfils its mission to the world.

Among the teachers of this vast heterogeneous population art must hold a first place. It uses a language which men of all languages understand; it is the only language adequate to the final and complete expression of ultimate ideas and ideals; and it is the open window in the workshop of the modern world. The literature of a people expresses and preserves its spirit more perfectly and permanently than its laws; its books are accessible to all men in the ordinary conditions of life; it continues to reach and stimulate long after formal text-books have been laid aside. The art which builds so as to embody and symbolize great public ideals, as in the National Capitol; which so reproduces the form and bearing of a leader so to suggest hour by hour a great man or a great achievement as in the statue of General Sherman at the entrance to Central Park in the city of New York; which so enriches the homes of a country as to educate the eye while it rests and refreshes the imagination, cannot fail to take a first place in the group of influences which are making foreign-born men and women Americans in spirit and habit.

AS breaking through the clouds at close of day,
 The sun, all glorious, gilds the sorrowing Earth,
 So Art, reflecting Nature's smile,
 Touches, with Midas' finger, common things,
 And stirs anew the hidden depths of Mirth.

—Anon.